
From the Office of Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Food and Wine Tasting Supports Small and
Minority Businesses in Connecticut**
*3rd Annual CT Showcase Event Connects Entrepreneurs and
Regional Business Leaders*

HARTFORD, CT, - Aetna and The Hartford Stage are teaming with the Connecticut Small and Minority Business Showcase for the Third Annual Food and Wine Tasting, showing their ongoing support of the business development programs provided to small and minority business entrepreneurs by the Connecticut Secretary of the State's office. This year's Food and Wine Tasting will be held on Tuesday, March 21, 2006 from 5:30 to 8:00 pm at Aetna's Corporate Headquarters at 151 Farmington Avenue in Hartford. For tickets and information please visit www.hartfordstage.org

The business networking event, planned by the CT Showcase, is widely attended by regional corporate procurement professionals, business decision makers, and corporate, government, and community leaders. It provides an effective forum for small business owners and entrepreneurs to meet the leaders who can support their ongoing success. The Hartford Stage community relations group has worked hand-in-hand to support the event since its inception in 2004. All proceeds from the event fund the small and minority business building programs and events developed and managed by the CT Small and Minority Business Showcase.

"We are hopeful that business owners, prospective business owners, and potential customers will come by on March 21 to take part in the Food and Wine Tasting, to enjoy themselves, and to learn more about the exciting opportunities available to small and minority-owned businesses in Connecticut," **Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz** said. "Small businesses are the engine grows our economy. The Connecticut Small and Minority Business Showcase exists within our office to provide a better, friendlier climate to all current and future small business owners in Connecticut. Programs like these help to support this important work."

"Aetna believes strongly in the power of small business," said **Kate Begley**, General Manager for Aetna's Small Group business in the Northeast. "Small businesses created more than 96 percent of the jobs in Connecticut during the past 10 years.

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As a leading Connecticut company with a 150-year tradition of supporting the local community, Aetna has long championed entrepreneurs and provided resources for them. Most recently, we created Aetna Resource Connection to leverage our purchasing power and pass on our “big company” discounts on computers, office supplies, and payroll software to our small business customers. We’ve hosted seminars on how to grow and sustain a healthy business, and now we are proud to sponsor this year’s Food and Wine Tasting, a fun networking event that supports the important work of the Secretary of the State to assist small, micro, minority and women-owned businesses in gaining access to capital.”

The CTShowcase exemplifies its commitment to the development and growth of the small and minority business community in Connecticut by spotlighting them in the production of the event. Gouveia Vineyards, a Connecticut based small business located in Wallingford, will pour the featured wine this year. For more information on Gouveia Vineyards, please visit www.gouveiavineyards.com

“The expansion of the business building opportunities that The CTShowcase provides to hundreds of small and minority businesses is directly related to the events and programs it manages, and the support provided by corporations and organizations, such as Aetna and The Hartford Stage,” explained **Harland Henry**, Director of Community Outreach and Business Development for the Secretary of the State’s Office. “As we continue to grow the program we look forward to continued favorable economic impact on small businesses in Connecticut.”

The flagship program of CTShowcase is its semi-annual business education and exhibit event, ‘Business Showcase’, which is held at different venues throughout the state. These events provide a forum for small and minority businesses to present their products and services to potential buyers, including mid-size businesses, corporate buyers, and consumers. The next Business Showcase will be held on April 6th in New London. (Visit www.ctshowcase.biz for details)

CTShowcase also holds business training and educational programs for the entrepreneur, including sales and marketing training and procurement training events. Many of these are organized and supported by small business community leaders, showing the reciprocal commitment that exists in the community. This year’s food and wine tasting is being organized by commVerge Marketing, a small, minority-owned marketing services firm located in New Haven county. Visit their web site at www.cverge.com.

*****MORE*****

EVENT DETAILS

Third Annual CTShowcase Food and Wine Tasting

March 21, 2006 5:30PM to 8:00PM

Aetna, 151 Farmington Ave, Hartford

Tickets/Registration: \$20, After March 1st \$30

Buy Tickets and get more information: www.hartfordstage.org, or call the box office at 860-527-5151.

Several opportunities to sponsor this event are available. Please visit www.hartfordstage.org for details.

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